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For Immediate Release: April 10, 2012
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Smoking Materials Ignite Dartmouth Apartment Complex Fire

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Dartmouth Fire District #3 Chief Richard K. Arruda have determined that the cause of last evening's fire at 500 Dartmouth Woods was the improper disposal of smoking materials. The fire originated on a second floor balcony.

The building is totally destroyed and the estimated dollar loss is \$2,000,000. It contained 16 apartments and 35 people are displaced. All the occupants have been accounted for and there were no injuries as a result of this fire.

The fire was jointly investigated by the State Police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal, members of the Dartmouth District #3 Fire Department and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF).

"As more and more people are smoking outdoors, more smoking fires are originating on the exterior – places like balconies, exterior stairways and enclosed porches. In 2010, half of all smoking fires in homes started on the exterior," said State Fire Marshal Coan. "It is important to have deep sturdy ashtrays or cans filled with sand or water for people to dispose of their smoking materials," he added.

Chief Arruda said, "Fires that start on the exterior often become very large before the fire detection or sprinkler systems are activated. We are extremely lucky that no one was injured in this fire. If this had happened in the middle of the night, things might have been different."

Massachusetts Fires Caused by Smoking Materials

In Massachusetts during 2010, 1,862 fires were caused by smoking including: 576 structure fires, 25 motor vehicle fires, 946 tree, brush or grass fires, 78 trash or rubbish fires, 114 special outside fires, and eight cultivated vegetation or crop fires. These fires caused ten civilian deaths, 36 civilian injuries, 42 firefighter injuries and an estimated \$14.7 in property damage.

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